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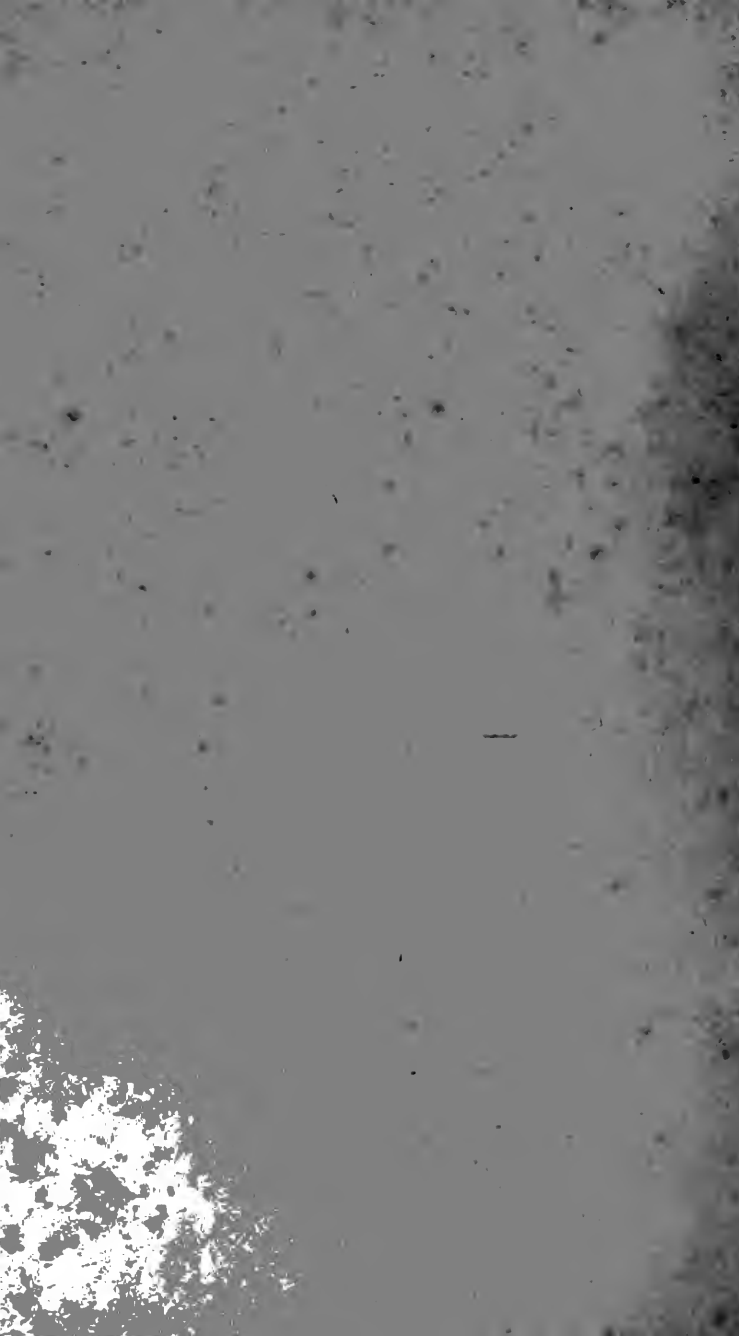
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A PLEA
FOR
LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE,
AND
PERSONAL FREEDOM
FROM
MILITARY CONSCRIPTION.

IN LETTERS TO
THOMAS LORING, ESQ.

BY JOSHUA WILDER.

**A PLACE FOR EVERY MEMBER IN THE BODY, AND ALSO IN
THE BODY POLITIC—AND EVERY MEMBER IN ITS PLACE.**

HINGHAM :
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JANUARY, 1840.

THE

AMERICAN

REVIEW

OF

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OF

P R E F A C E .

IN addressing these Letters to you, Sir, I have endeavored to fulfill the duty that I voluntarily took upon myself, some time since, in the very short interview that took place between us ; when, on your asking of me what were my views on the question of excusing from Military Service those persons who could not conscientiously do such duties, I replied, that as my views on the subject were somewhat different from the most commonly received opinions, I would endeavor, if I could find opportunity, to write out my mind thereon ; and, also, on the subject of having in the State none other than a Volunteer Military Corps, to be paid for their services. But, in addressing these Letters to you, Sir, I am far from supposing that you favor the views that I have here expressed, excepting on the rights of conscience, which you hold sacred, as you have shown by your noble and praiseworthy defence thereof, made in the Legislature of the State, at its session of 1839 ; for which you have my grateful regard.

The Letters are of greater length than I had supposed would be necessary, to illustrate my views with argument, on these subjects. A better tact at writing, would have enabled me to make them much shorter ; but, as I could apply no more talent to the work than what I possessed, I shall submit them to you, Sir, to make such use of them as you may deem proper ; hoping that they will not meet with sudden destruction, nor any, until the sentiments they contain shall be more generally known ; and, as far as they may be right, acknowledged.

LETTER I.

HAVING made some prefatory remarks, I shall now commence my plea for the rights of the conscientiously scrupulous, and all others, to whom the personal service of Military duty is a burthen ; and then proceed to offer arguments in favor of establishing the Military Corps of the State, upon Volunteer enlistments, and an equitable compensation for services.

And, here I shall state distinctly, and unequivocally, that it is my belief, that a Government of Laws, and of Civil Officers to execute them, and a Military establishment, to add strength and power to the civil authorities, when resisted by violence at home or abroad, are necessary, in the present existing state of the world. That it will always continue to be so, is more than I believe any person knows ; nor is it necessary for my present purpose here to consider.

Having endeavored to base some of my arguments on Bible authority, I shall here say, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, especially those of the New, are admitted, by the most civilized nations, as the best written rules, taken as a whole, by which to model and subject to action, our Moral sentiments ; and every man in this State, who honestly governs himself as he believes the Scriptures dictate to him, stands acquitted to his

Creator, and also to the reflecting, sober, upright part of the community that know him. Why is it so? Surely not because *his* particular views of faith and practice are to be taken as rules or models, by which a whole community, or perhaps any few members of it, will find it their duty to be governed;—it is rather because he appears to aim to walk uprightly, according to the Scriptures, as he understands them—and what makes it more evident, that the Moral sentiment, of the thinking, sober and intelligent part of civilized communities, is founded on, or drawn from the Moral sentiment made manifest in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, is, that when any great moral question is being discussed, an appeal is made directly to the Christian Scriptures, for, or against, the controverted points; and their authority is but seldom questioned, even by those who disbelieve their being of divine origin. Their pure and highly elevated moral tone commands the respect of most men who are desirous of establishing order and harmony among the dwellings of men on earth.

The foregoing remarks on the authority of the Scriptures, as a governing rule, to those who receive them as such, being admitted, I shall, in the remarks that I shall hereafter make on my proposed subject, regard every person's conscience, which appears to have been formed by any Moral sentiments drawn from the Bible, and more especially from the New Testament, as sacred to him that holds it, as is the temple of God, which none can with impunity defile; and so I would, also, every

other person's conscience, even if it were formed in the worship of idols.

Here a question may be asked—Can persons conscientiously differing in their apprehensions of duty be right ? I answer yes—not only as *they* are individually affected, but also as such differing may effect the greatest good of the whole. There is no more necessity that they should think, or believe alike, or act alike, to constitute them upright, honest men, promoting their own and the world's greatest good, than there is for them to look alike, or speak alike, and to eat and drink and labour alike, and so on, to make them equally happy and equally as useful in the society where they reside. As no two persons are ever, in every particular form and circumstance, alike, we must consent to think and act somewhat differently, to effect the most good to ourselves and the community. That our very differing views, condition and circumstances, are in some respects the result of our, or of others vices, is very true ; and so also are many of the pains and afflictions that variously befall us. If we are free from superstition and pride of character, and always act honestly, we shall often, in the judgment of others, appear to believe, and to act, inconsistent with ourselves, others not knowing our progress, and, what is more controlling, our, and the world's, actual change of circumstances ; therefore it was, as I believe, that our Lord taught his Disciples to “judge not, that ye be not judged.” Criminating others begets the spirit of recrimination in them ; and thus, the beginning of warrings, and the destruction, often terrible, that follows.

Our Lord taught his Disciples by general principles, never binding them to any one formal line of conduct or of worship, but ever holding them bound to abide in "Supreme Love to God," and unfeigned "good will to men." And I shall here say, that I believe there may be circumstances, when Christ's disciples might find it their duty, to arm themselves with carnal weapons, even when Supreme Love to God and good will to men, controlled their every action—as in obedience to the command of Christ, did his disciples of old sell their garments to purchase them swords ; suffering them, also, to use them, (or one of them,) to the shedding of human blood ; commanding them at the proper time to "put up the sword into its sheath ;" healing all the evils or wounds which his disciple had been suffered to inflict, by his permit ; instructing them also, that those that had recourse to the sword, would be likely to perish by it.

LETTER II.

Believing, as I do, that our Lord taught his chosen Disciples, to suffer wrong without repelling the wrong doer by physical means, I cannot but believe that the work of redeeming man from his uncontrolled lust and passion to injure his fellow man, will be far better promoted, by them, in observing the non-resistance doctrines in their practice as well as by their precepts ; therefore, laws that would make any of those persons at this day do mil-

itary service, who believe it their duty to promulgate the non-resistance doctrines as taught by our Lord, either by precept or by example, will tend, so far as said laws can, to destroy not only the liberty of certain subjects of the State to worship God as conscience dictates, but also to counteract the best means of converting the ignorant and inconsiderate, who are disposed hastily to resort to deeds of violence (to redress some supposed or real injury) from the evil of their way, to a more peaceful adjustment of their real or supposed wrongs.

But, say those who do not believe it to be their duty to submit to an insult without seeking revenge, not having so "learned Christ," Who shall execute the law upon the lawless, and upon the violaters of the rights of others? Shall they go unpunished? I answer, no. But before I make it the duty of some to execute the law, as ministers of righteousness, I will endeavor to show, that it is physically, and morally certain, that there are those to whom it does not belong. That many are physically disabled from becoming personally the executors of the most righteous of laws, needs no illustration. The best means to relieve them from a burthen that they are not qualified to bear, will be a subject for discussion hereafter.

That some persons are morally disqualified to perform certain acts, is clear; and among those acts is that of executing vengeance, by the order of others, upon persons that they may believe have broken no righteous law, or if having broken some law, that they were ignorant of it; and therefore in their

circumstances they could not have done otherwise. To such, the moral sentiment of some persons would bind them to show no other offensive or defensive weapons than kindness, and unfeigned forgiveness, in the holy spirit of charity, believing ourselves (for the writer of this does believe himself) bound by the precepts and practice of our Lord to forgive our enemies, and do "good to those that hate us," having entire confidence in the wisdom of God, as manifested in the Gospel, thus to promote the greatest happiness of both parties concerned.

We also believe that the good to be gained by two belligerent persons, or nations, practicing on the precepts of our Lord, to be many fold greater than it would be if the parties were to seek vengeance and pursue it, as is most commonly practised, till the weaker of the two yields from necessity, some matter of the dispute, recruiting again, perhaps, for another contest.

There are many of us holding the non-resisting opinions, that believe without the shadow of doubt, that there has ever existed, and that there ever will continue to exist, an omniscient and an omnipresent God, and that man is his offspring, and as such, we are in duty bound to devote every power and faculty that he has endowed us with, in obedience to what we believe he requires of us. Very many of such are morally incapable of uttering a falsehood, knowing it to be such, and of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain, and of doing very many other acts which we believe are expressly forbidden by him. And, why is it that so many of

the devoted children of their Creator, have been, and continue to be, ready to suffer every torture that human invention can inflict, and even death itself, rather than do that which they believe their Creator forbids ? It is not because it is gratifying to any of their natural propensities or carnal desires thus to suffer. It must be because they believe, and believe too, without the shadow of a doubt, that if they forsake the truth, and their duty, as they understand it, that God will not hold *them* guiltless.

And can it be through weakness, or self-will, or the want of honesty, or by darkness and delusion, or from any unjustifiable cause, that those who have offered themselves up, to do in all things, and at all times without reserve, the will of their Creator, as made known through the Gospel of his Son, should misunderstand so plain a precept as the following, given by our Lord to his disciples, "But I say unto you love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you, and persecute you ;" and also very many other commands equally plain and binding on the consciences of devoted persons who have such precepts engraven on their hearts, as they believe, by the finger of God ? Is it strange that they should refuse to learn the art of war, the most expert method to execute vengeance and death upon an enemy, whom by the command of the Lord and Saviour, whom they serve, they are taught to love, and to do acts of kindness to, rather than injury ? Certainly not. Self interest or

personal gratification, the fountains from which delusion and consequent weakness and death are drank, has little or no controlling influence on persons thus governed by moral principle, and abiding the issue for life or death. Some will say that such conscientious persons are deluded, and wrong in their belief. I would ask such, if they have the means of convincing them of their error, or changing their belief? Can you do it by giving them the New Testament to read? With the language and spirit of this book, they are much acquainted. It is morally impossible for them to alter their belief, or change their practice, and be sincere and honest in their devotions, until some new light or evident truth dawns upon their mind, revealing to them a better and more perfect way. We cannot create belief or faith; it is the gift of our Creator. We can govern ourselves by its evidence, and thereby maintain a good conscience, and we can reject its moral suasion, and thus make shipwreck of "faith and a good conscience." Therefore, until something shall be done that will change the belief of persons who think that they ought not to learn the art of war, it will avail nothing to compel them to learn it, and, thereby violate their more than constitutional rights—rights that existed prior to any written compacts, and, also, to the time when men forsook the laws of nature and of nature's God, and sought out many inventions, substituting their might as a rule of right, rather than allowing to all their inalienable right to serve God as they believe he requires them.

It cannot be thought strange at the present day that persons can be found among many of the christian sects acknowledging the New Testament as a guide, who believe that the Creator of man has destined him to become in morals, more perfect than in ages past, or in the present age. Believing thus, they see, or think they see, the wisdom of Christ in giving us the precept, "love your enemies," &c., offering as a reason, that "ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven."

The faith of reflecting christians is made stronger by arguments drawn from the philosophy of christianity, or the reasonableness of the precepts it inculcates, to render good for evil. It being evident that when two persons or nations, differ, each party is frequently in the wrong, through the covetousness or ignorance, perhaps, of both; consequently neither the one nor the other party has justifiable cause for molesting or injuring the other. And what will restrain violence so effectually as forbearance, even after one party has been smitten on the cheek by the other, which last I will here admit to be the aggressor? What here does philosophy teach us? What does experience teach us? Does it teach us that the better way is for the party attacked to give a return blow, receiving another, and so on, until each party, as is very commonly the case, becomes so exhausted and tired of the contest as to be willing to cease from its work of death and leave the disputed points as they found them; or does it teach us that forbearance, and perhaps a long or a short discussion at the commence-

ment of their differings, would have shown, if not clearly, yet in a good measure, the merits and errors of each, and brought to the party that mostly coveted the rights of the other, the greater condemnation ?

LETTER III.

In this letter, I shall make some comments on what I believe to be *Anti-Christian* in the practice and professions of some Christian sects, and also of many individuals, who, not regarding the precept of Christ against swearing, have, as I believe, *inconsiderately* retained the *practice* of not only binding themselves in Creeds, and by Vows, but also in their *intercourse* with men, as when they assert without reserve that they will, or that they will not, do this or that. Any positive assertions made, or religious Vows taken upon us, are as binding as would be an Oath, and are the substance of an oath ; which our Lord gave his disciples sufficient reason for not taking upon them, the substance of which was, that they could not alter any of the works of God, or the laws of nature ; and St. James adds to his very positive injunctions against swearing, “ lest ye fall into condemnation.” We cannot control circumstances, but they are ever controlling us. I may have believed it to *have* been my duty, to have taken the profession of a soldier, and sworn to the faithful discharge of the duties of the profession, but some circumstances occurring that I did not, and could

not foresee, may have been the means of enlightening my mind on the impropriety of my continuing bound to its duties ; I sue for a discharge, and plead that the duties of my profession are revolting to my humanity, and as they *have been and are likely* to be imposed upon me, I shall be the instrument of doing to my fellow men much more harm than good. But my *oath*, binding me to the service, is presented to my view, and in it I read my *condemnation*. if I withdraw without permit, which I have no means of obtaining ; and to continue in the service, in any of its departments, will make me accessory to the deeds of murder that may be acted ; and an accessory I can no longer conscientiously be, and, leaving the service, I retire with all the condemnation that my broken promise brings upon me. But it is our duty to fulfill every engagement that we may have voluntarily made, so far as it depends on our personal agency unaffected by controlling circumstances. We are to let our “yea be yea, and our nay be nay.”

I will here add that I believe no person can, consistently with the commands of Christ against swearing, bind himself to any religious creed or sect that forbids him, under all circumstances, to use carnal weapons. For, as I have elsewhere stated, our Lord did, on one occasion, arm his disciples, suffering one of them to draw and use his sword to the shedding of human blood.

We ought not to be bound or even trammelled by *any* creed or to *any* society that would limit us in the freedom of our consciences to serve our Creator

or to benefit our fellow men in any way that our understanding may dictate to us in the spirit of charity. The spirit of the Gospel goes to make every man a *whole* man, a *perfect* man, and necessarily a *freeman* ; being bound to do nothing to his fellow men that he cannot do in the spirit of love and charity, and with a single eye to the divine will of his Creator.

Bind men to Creeds and Forms, and they soon become measurably satisfied that the observance of *them* is their only safe road to salvation ; and their eye, that may have been single to the will of their Creator, as manifested to them from time to time, and "from faith to faith," will be more or less withdrawn therefrom and fixed on their Creeds and Forms. They will make *them* their image of God ; and worship them as a God ; having turned their eye off from the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, they voluntarily, (or through the "wiles of satan,") have, after being once made free, and therefore happy in the full enjoyment of a pure and upright conscience, held sacred only but by an entirely free and full devotion, and pure worship of the one living, true and holy God ; in which spirit of devotion and pure worship they also unfeignedly served their fellow men. I say they have again (after being once thus made free) taken upon them a yoke of bondage, under the slavery of which, they measurably cease to serve or worship a living God ; and are thereby tramelled in their usefulness to men.

I shall now quote one more doctrinal precept of

our Lord, that I believe tends to justify many persons from becoming military men, or placing themselves liable to do its duties : “Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” And “whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

This doctrine, to me certifies positively, that no person is held accountable to his Creator for any other sins than such as he may commit against a greater or a less degree of light, affecting his conscience ; for, in another precept, Jesus said, that the Comforter, or the Holy Ghost, “will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

Now I ask, by what moral law do Legislatures consign to misery and death (in the destructive wars which they carry on) so many of their fellow men, and men too, drawn out for such service against their wills, and often against their moral sentiment ? They are pressed on by their superiors, to face danger and death, to effect purposes, the wickedness of which their better judgments condemn, knowing well, or believing, that those who may be designated as their enemies, have been guilty of no fault deserving violent chastisement, much less sudden death. In almost all wars, conducted as they have been in ages past (but I am

happy in believing much less so in the present) the innocent, in each of the belligerent parties, are as much subjected to violent chastisement and death as are those who are the most guilty promoters of them. Being aware that if we consent to enroll ourselves as soldiers, we make ourselves liable to become partakers with the State in her sins, the greatest of which committed in her wars, is the punishing the innocent with the guilty, we shrink back from the service, holding ourselves the servants of God only, and not the servants of men; claiming the privilege as our inalienable right.

I am aware that governments presume that every person found in arms, (and often also those who are not,) if not for them, are against them--having evil intentions. The presumption might in part be admitted if none but Volunteers in either of the belligerent parties were made subject to the evils of the contest. When governments shall cease to conscript persons into their military ranks, there may be less complaint of the wickedness of their wars.

I have yet one *greater* objection to wars, and to becoming a soldier, drawn also from the foregoing precepts. The precept instructs me, most clearly, that none are guilty, and therefore that none ought to be punished, excepting those who disregard the evidence of holy truth, enlightening their minds. As *I* may not know or believe that very many of the denominated enemy have ever sinned against any light that has manifested to them the righteousness of the cause that I may be designated to

defend and fight for, how can I become God's avenger on those that I have no evidence he has designated as guilty of any crime that ought not to be pardoned?

Were a public officer to show me a person of whom he was in pursuit, that I had good cause to believe had, in violation of evidence more or less clearly manifest in his mind, committed some plunder in the night, or violence on the person of a fellow citizen, requesting me to assist in apprehending him, I should readily exert whatever of ability I possessed; and if, in the contest, I should believe that the criminal would take the life of the officer, unless I immediately interposed by the only possible alternative, to take the life of the criminal, I believe that it would be my duty to do it, and I should unhesitatingly attempt the act. I should consider the officer as God's agent, and appointed (in the supposed case) his avenger, and that his life was more sacred than was that of the criminal. Not that I admit that the sanctity of the office of him that is appointed to execute the law sanctions his every act. The sanctity of the office is created only through the sacredness of the orders entrusted to the officer. If he receive unrighteous orders, and execute them, the sanctity of his office ceases to exist, and he is not then the "messenger of God to us for good."

I have extended these remarks to expose the fallacy of the excuse often made by inferior officers for executing the unrighteous command of their superiors. If their superiors have imposed false

coin upon them, then on their heads *only* should fall the weight of the blow.

Having endeavored to give you some of my reasons why certain persons believe that they are not in duty bound to learn or to practice the art of war, I will here add one more, that those who are read in the history of the first two centuries of the christian era, advance as a further confirmation of the correctness of their views and conduct.

Thomas Clarkson, in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, vol. 3, New York, 1806, has quoted largely from very many of the early christian writers, showing most conclusively, that almost all persons who became converts to christianity; for the first two hundred years, relinquished the profession of arms; and in very many instances, at the cost of their lives; pleading as the cause of their abandonment of the profession, that they were Christians, and therefore could not fight. He says, also, that history allowed to the Christians of that age, the character of holy and devout men and women, practicing every virtue inculcated by the founder of their religion.

LETTER IV.

I shall notice in this Letter the ill-adaptedness of the Military Corps of the State, by its conscriptive laws, to its present or probable future wants, in connection with argument, on the just claims of many other persons than those of the conscientious-

ly scrupulous from military conscription, and also give some of my reasons why a government having military power is necessary.

The human family, like the stars in the firmament of heaven, are created for useful purposes; but no two appear to have been created for one and the same purpose. Some planets move in one sphere with great rapidity, while others, moving in opposite directions and with less velocity, appear not to interfere in their progress with each other; unlike man only in not being possessed of will and power by which they can contravene the laws of nature and of their creator God.

But *men* are not inanimate machines, without will and power, therefore we move onward in accordance with nature's, and her own Creator's laws; *only* as we may have been by him first propelled, and by knowledge made more or less acquainted with them, by exerting the power that wisdom imparts, upon our *wills*, to subject them thereto.

It is from creation which we can, thus in part, comprehend what we may well learn, that man can never arrive to that freedom and consequent perfection of his being, which will effect his, and the greatest good of the whole, so long as he shall continue to violate, rather than move onward in accordance with its laws. If man will continue to move in other spheres than those plainly marked out for him by his Creator, through Nature and Revelation, he will ever be liable to injurious collisions and premature death.

To illustrate more plainly the subject that I have

proposed in this letter, than I can well do in bringing to view the order and harmony of the heavenly bodies only, I will endeavor to show that there ought to be the same order and fitness of position in the government of the body politic of this Commonwealth, from its highest to its lowest members, that is necessary in the human body, to constitute it a perfect body, without rent or schism.

That there is but little of order in the present Military Department of the Government is evident; and, it is occasioned, as I believe, by the wrong designation (by the heads thereof) of many members of the Body Politic, to improper places therein.

The Body Politic of the State is made up of many members, none of which can be taken from their proper place without injury to the whole. Like the human body, there must be a head to direct, and an eye to see, an ear to hear, and an arm for defence and for a great variety of other purposes. Therefore, let us, in designating to duties the members of our community, be careful to let every member of it move in such department of society as he is best fitted for; placing at the head him who is well qualified to perceive all the wants of the body and put in motion such members of it as will execute in the most direct and best manner the duties to which they are called.

Those persons who are to fill *any* situation in the body politic, must be well fitted to the place they are to occupy, or they will cause schism in the body. Who, occupying the head, as do the Legislature of the State, would be wise to call upon a non-resist-

ance man to execute vengeance upon evil doers ? And who could commend the head for its discretion were it in want of a strong arm for defence, if it should place to that department in the body (as our heads have done) many members of the political community that are no more adapted to do the duties of the arm, than is the eye, or the ear. Time, labour and money, spent to habituate the ear to do the duties of the arm, or any other than those of its office, would be worse than lost, as it would more or less tend to disqualify it to serve in its more appropriate duties. And thus it is in the attempt to make soldiers of many members of the body politic, in this State and elsewhere. Time, labour and money are spent, to organize and equip, train and discipline, no inconsiderable portion of its citizens that never will be any benefit to the State in her military corps.

The weakest finger of the hand, can better supply the place and do the duties of the arm, than can very many of those citizens who are enrolled in the Militia of the State, discharge the duties of actual service, in cases of emergency, when effective men only, and not forms and shadows, could be considered useful. Such disqualified and misplaced persons in the body, would be worse than useless, as would soon be manifest from the consequent rent that would ensue. Had they been left unmolested to discharge such duties in the body politic as they were best qualified to perform, the Corps would not have been so unwieldly, nor would its life and sinews, (which wealth gives,) have been by them di-

minished, or the rent through them experienced ; and the State might, through their labors in their accustomed occupations, have been enriched, and *thus* strengthened in its vitality, the energy and power of which, gives to the arm its greatest weight of action.

From the foregoing remarks, it may perhaps be inferred, that the writer would leave the burthen of military duty upon a selected few of the citizens of the State, thus imposing upon them a burthen which neither he, nor his conscientious friend, nor others, not qualified to perform its duties, would lighten with one of their fingers.

Here I shall answer, not for myself in every point of view, but as I suppose some conscientious persons might well reply ; interspersing some arguments in favor of my views, and endeavor to give some reasons why I consider Governments and Military power justifiable under the Christian dispensation.

Those, then, who may believe that no civil government is necessary, other than church government, or some other like government, not having authority to enforce their decisions by the sword, might reply, that they do not believe, that, from the time that our Lord first began to promulgate his Gospel, it has ever been necessary or righteous for any person professing the religion that he taught to coerce with carnal weapons any person or persons, whether belonging to their community or to others, to respect their rights of property or of person ; therefore, they cannot voluntarily contribute

their mite, much less their personal aid to any military establishment. But if others do believe coercing military power to be more or less necessary, on *them*, and on them only, ought the burthen to rest ; for, if we were voluntarily to contribute to the support of what we believe ought not to be supported by christians under any circumstances, we should give the lie to our belief and profession, and thereby not only injure our usefulness, but bring upon ourselves that, which for the love of life, we could not endure, the condemnation of God, and a separation from the saints in Heaven. Against persons using such arguments, believing them honest, I could not reply that *they* were unwilling to bear their part of the burthen necessary to the public good, as it would unjustly accuse them of sordid motives, of which they manifest no signs.

In such a defence I cannot but see that those who make it, are, being honest, as totally disqualified to voluntarily take any such burthens upon them, as they would be to commit any other criminal act. And for myself I here say that much of the foregoing argument is in defence of my own views on the rights of conscience ; not because I believe no military can righteously be supported, (they not having considered that but few of the heads of governments are christian) but for many reasons, other than physical inability, I do not believe it my duty to become a member of the Corps. The first that I shall here make is, that as a believer in every precept of the Gospel that I can understand, I should feel myself greatly condemned to resort to arms to

defend myself, or others, unless a high sense of duty should make it clearly right.

I believe that almost all public wars, or civil wars of any kind, have their origin in the lust and wickedness of both the parties. Like individuals, each one sees, or thinks he sees the errors of the other, but is blind to his own. It may not be so always—it is not so at all times in individuals who differ.

I shall here offer one or two more reasons that hold me, as an honest man, founding my faith on what I consider important revelations in the doctrines of the Gospel, from resorting to the sword in unison with a military corps to avenge supposed wrongs. I believe that God has ordained the sword to be used against evil doers only ; and against *such* I believe it is mostly used ; but I also believe that the evil doers are usually of both the contending parties, and covetous of other's rights ; that there is a holding back in both parties, through covetousness, that which if yielded would tend to produce the greatest good of both. Were the heads of the parties often to drink deep (while controverting the matter in dispute) from the inexhaustible fountain of Gospel truth, and purge themselves from all covetous and ambitious desires, there would soon be no just cause of war in the minds of either party. But it is not so—and the remark that has frequently been made, that an honest man is not to be entrusted with the conducting of State affairs, is too much held as a sound maxim. That one or the other of the contending parties is wrong, through covetousness, “which the Lord hateth and the right-

eous hateth," will be admitted ; and however considerable the subject of dispute may be, the sword is resorted to, and when all the judgments designated for the contending parties shall have been accomplished by him whose laws whether of nature, or of revelation, can never with impunity be violated, the maimed and exhausted, who supported and bore the burthen, and lived through the trial, have usually but little more to console themselves with than their manifested bravery and skill, in thus ignorantly executing judgments upon each other's devoted heads. "He that taketh the sword, shall perish by the sword," was uttered by him who also said "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

I shall now continue the examination of the comparability of a military power, under the christian dispensation. I believe that at the time Jesus said "it is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost," neither he through the power of God nor God through him in his life, death and resurrection, had done comparatively little more than complete, (not only through the agency of his wonderfully adapted person but especially through the perfection of the Wisdom, Love and Truth, and every other virtue which he possessed without measure,) a new code of Laws, or *ways* and *means* that were and ever will be, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, most perfectly adapted to the nature and various conditions of man to effect his greatest good in redeeming him from ignorance and sin, misery and death, to the light of truth, and freedom from sin and misery to life and immortality.

This plainly delineated chart of the narrow though straight road from earth to heaven, or code of laws, that "he who runs may read," had been exhibited in full to but *few* of the sons and daughters of men at the time of its completion. Although a less perfect form of it was beheld by Abraham, and many other saints of old, to their great joy in future hope, its full glories to see : and as this chart, by its Great Author, has been withheld or made to appear dressed in almost numberless unmeaning and obscuring costumes, and, as there has been as yet but few of the world of men (as there were but few when Jesus said "it is finished") who have been brought by its redeeming power to the government of its laws ; therefore, I have not the shadow of a doubt that so long as there are in society unredeemed men who can, in defiance of some moral principle showing them their error, commit harm, plunder or violence, either through art or deception, in secret or openly, or by any means whatever, upon the rights of others, whether of property or person, God will not only make manifest his justice but also as far as he can (by reason of the imperfection of man) his judgments also to their condemnation and accountability to those of the community they may have harmed.

If God did not provide some means or way to convince or show such transgressors that they must and would eventually be greater sufferers than gainers by the practice of error, they would ever continue to reject the principles of the Gospel, if it were proclaimed to them by the Son of God himself,

and they would become in time, if not cut off by judgments, more or less like brutes of many grades and kinds, the worshipers at the shrine of power, the stronger making prey of the weaker, from him who might be the most powerful down to him who might be the last that they could plunder or devour.

As it was ordained by God from the day of the first transgression, that there should be enmity between the seed of the deceiver and the seed of the woman, and that the seed of the woman should bruise the deceiver's head, and as he has ordained governments to execute vengeance upon evil doers and not upon those who are made free from sin or transgression, and as Christ made no provision in his new covenant for pulling down or for removing any of the governments of the earth that existed or that ever might exist when he said "it is finished," but did, in the days of his flesh, pay tribute for the support of holy things, and rendered to the rulers of the earth their dues, I cannot show any cause for questioning the sanctity of Governments taken as a whole ; not only for the suppression of evil doers that may rise up against their authority, but also to act as God's vicegerents, to execute his vengeance upon the wicked of the earth in heavy judgments poured out upon one another ; in which judgments God can by and through their wrath establish praise to himself, and the redemption of the oppressed and bowed down throughout the earth. Here I will add, that if it is God's will, and I believe it is, to use a military power to execute judgment on earth, let it be like the sword that they use, so

organized and supported as will render it most efficient in the work of destruction.

LETTER V.

In this letter, Sir, I intend to re-examine some points of my former arguments, for the purpose of adding weight to some important ones that I have but too lightly noticed ; and then proceed to show, what I believe to be the only justifiable ground, guarding the *rights* and the greatest *good*, of all the parties concerned, upon which to call into being and to maintain a Military Corps in the State, viz : Voluntary Enlistments.

Having admitted, and endeavored to make it evident that Governments have not only the right, but that it is their duty to enact laws in consonance with the laws of nature and of God, tending to produce the greatest good of the whole ; and also like nature, to suffer no person to violate them with impunity, pardoning the innocently ignorant, but punishing those who knowingly and willingly violate the rights of any person or community ; having also admitted that through covetousness and various other causes, men frequently combine in greater or less numbers, and with carnal weapons plunder or commit violence upon the property or person of others ; and as no *one* person can, without or with the sword, exert a power sufficient to arrest and confine for judgment, any powerful combination of lawless depredators, therefore the Body Politic is in duty bound to arm

and equip, and well maintain, at the general charge of the whole body, a sufficient number of most perfectly armed and equipped persons who are by nature and God, well qualified in their every capacity to act as an arm of defence in ready obedience to the commands of the *head*, to arrest, if having power sufficient, said lawless person or persons, that they may have opportunity to plead and exonerate themselves from the charge of evil intent. But if said person or persons offer resistance with deadly weapons, the State is in duty bound, through the agency of her well appointed power, to exert so much thereof as will most effectually suppress, by greater or less judgment, said lawless depredators.

The head and arms, and all the other members of the body, necessarily called to learn and serve in any of the aforesaid duties, to receive such compensation for their time and services, as will induce a sufficient number of the best qualified persons to engage therein ; leaving all those out of the military corps who are any way disqualified to discharge its duties.

There is one very important point in this plea, that I have not directly brought to view in my former letters, the *partial* inability of many persons from physical and moral causes, that more or less disqualify them for the duties of the soldier.

The writer of these letters, never in but one instance obeyed the injunction of the law, and then he was not of age, to equip, arm and answer to his name, as an enrolled soldier, although for many years he was liable, and hard pressed to do said du-

ties, the law having made no provision for his release, and therefore he well knows how much some persons may suffer that are pressed to appear in arms, who have not fully made up their minds, that no considerations or consequences can induce to do so. Restless were his days, and disturbed was his sleep at night, before he fully resigned himself to disregard such calls, and abide the issue.

If the heads of the State are desirous to root out honesty in its members, let them continue to impose fines and execute them by imprisonment, upon those who have it, and then the youth and others who have but a small share of it, and that much buried in the rubbish of cares, will become to them an easy prey. It is from the shoulders of such persons and the young and tender who are not so fully grown in their conscientious scruples of military duties as to be unmoved by the power of oppression, and also from the shoulders of all other persons more or less disqualified from any and every cause, of every name and nature, that this burthen should be removed. It is in behalf of the rights, the inalienable rights of those of my fellow citizens, and also for the purpose of having a military corps of persons in this Commonwealth so organized and so allied to the government of the Body Politic, holding themselves ever ready to accomplish whatever duties the Head may direct, that I wish some change to be made. It is in the hope of rendering some aid in effecting the more speedy accomplishment of the foregoing objects, that I have taken my pen to commit to you, Sir, and through the press to the public these Letters.

There is one more point, although I am limited for time and means, that I cannot honestly pass without noticing. It refers to the onerous considerations or equivalents as they are termed by some to be demanded of those persons who cannot conscientiously do military duty, and also of others refusing to do it from any cause, not recognized by law : to be paid in money, into the appointed hand of him who is to see that it is appropriated to benevolent purposes. Here I ask, will the end justify the means ? We not having withheld any thing from the state that she has a right to, yet she demands our personal services in her military corps. We reply, according to circumstances, the conscientious part : That God has not designed us for the corps, and that he is greater than the State, therefore we worship him. The State replies, your personal services, or your money as an equivalent—it shall be put to the best of uses. We reply that the *end* will not justify the means—you must first have good claim on our persons to demand our property as an equivalent. To make her claim good, the State must first show that she has the right to compel any of her citizens to do military duty in disregard of their conscientious scruples ; for if she has no rightful claim on their persons, she cannot have a righteous one on their property, as an equivalent.

Here I submit a question—Are those who are scrupulous of bearing arms, guilty of an injurious act against the welfare of the whole ? Before an affirmative answer can here be given, the New Testament and its author, with every remembrance of its doctrines, must be struck into oblivion.

Those members of the community who deny the right of the State to their involuntary services in *any* of its departments, without compensation, in which denial they can support themselves, may answer in their defence against having their money transferred from their pockets to charitable uses as an equivalent for their personal service in the military corps, that they deny the right of the State to compel them to do any service for her without payment. Therefore, the State having no right to conscript them into the military corps, she can have no right to demand their money, as equivalent, on their neglect of personal duty, for if their money is taken from them without their consent, and appropriated to good purposes, they are not the less wronged. Buccaneers may do thus, but those whom they plunder are not the less injured.

This device might be pleaded in sanction of every species of plunder, and those who resort to it as a device to get at the property of others, as an equivalent for personal services of which they have no right, if weighed in the balance, will be found wanting. If the demand of the government is well bottomed, why put the monies to charitable uses rather than into the common funds? The answer must be that they would not be so readily yielded.

This plea, for thus imposing fines on military delinquents, is made in want of substantial ground to bottom them upon, and is at best a device, which can deceive the ignorant and awe the timid only. And as in all conscientious matters, so in this, the *weight* of the burthen will fall most heavily on those

who are weak in the faith of their profession. Every man first commences a child in moral principle, and if he shall bear up under all that oppresses him in tender youth, he will soon be uncontrolled by the oppressions of men. Every virtuous man should cultivate, rather than repress, any moral sense that manifests itself in young or old. He who should offend the young, that believed in him, Jesus declared, had better be by a millstone's weight in the depths of the sea.

The Conscriptive Military Laws of the State are not only injurious to all whom they oppressively effect, but, also, like all of Nature's Laws, far more injurious to those who covet to themselves some exclusive easements, or indulgencies, or peculiar advantages over men of equal merit ; by which covetous appropriations, others' justifiable claims are more or less perverted from their designed uses. Those who pervert the bounties of nature from their most beneficial uses, cannot escape receiving themselves the greater of the evils attending every such violation of the right ; and such perverters, will ever grow, if willful, blinder and blinder to their fate the nearer they approach it, until judgment commences her retributive work. From this truth let no transgressor think to escape.

What does this State expend yearly for the support of her Military, as now organized? Throwing all the items of every individual offering called for by its laws, demanding the personal service of its citizens and their necessary expenditures, &c. into the scale, the sum footed, would astound any one man

in this community who might be held liable to its payment. But it would be no more than the bona-fide sum that it now, under its conscriptive laws, disburses through the contributions of the less able of its citizens. And what has the State to show to balance this account—has she Military power or only the shadow of it? So far as *effective power* might be wanting, organized as it is, no insurrection arising from the usual or any probable causes would be likely to be put down by reason of the herterogeneous compounds of its nature; the “hay wood and stubble” of its composition would kindle more flame than the most virtuous of their citizens could extinguish. Neither would their discordant compounds be of much worth if called to repel an invasion; their unweildly composition would require as much, perhaps more, valuable power of some other kind to move them onward, than theirs would be worth in its application.

The military power of the State ought to be as concentrated as circumstances will admit, otherwise it may not be a *power in fact* but in *name* only. I do not mean by the concentration of power as here used, that whatever of power there may be in the Militia of the State should be all brought to rest at any one point in the State, or elsewhere. The power that does in *fact* exist in every division or subdivison of it, ought to be freed from every thing of every name and nature, so far as circumstances admit, that tends in any of its locations, in any way to lessen its weight or usefulness. As it is now composed, its real *power* reminds me of valuable

weights, encompassed and so mixed up with a variety of compounds that nothing short of some renovating process, or breaking up of the heterogeneous masses, can so bring them back to their proper elements that their true *weight* or *power* of the State will be so concentrated in every town that the lawless may be made to fear a power in *fact*, which they would disregard in *form* only.

That there are some persons in every community much better fitted to compel, by physical coercion, the lawless and disobedient to cease from their violence, than are others; none can doubt.* A few of *those*, well organized and perfectly equipped would, if well rewarded for devotion to their duties, awe turbulent rioters, neither in soft clothing or menial rags, that presume to disregard the natural and con-

*Here the question may be asked, why this difference? Being limited, I can here only say, that in moral, or, as some would please to term them, in religious attainments, we commence as children; therefore a difference by reason of growth—and also like them in the attainment of the physical sciences, some are far better qualified by nature and God, to receive many of the important truths contained therein, than are others; who, likewise, having differently constituted minds, will be better qualified to attain a knowledge of other equally important truths, and perhaps far better adapted in their physical capacity to the execution than to the designing of any work—such will make good soldiers, under the command of righteous, intelligent officers. In these particulars God has made us to differ—"we having nothing that we have not received." But holding, as I do, that man is a free agent, having power to do, and also not to do, many things that he does do, which fact can never be disproved, I admit that our differing is frequently a *fault*, for which we justly receive condemnation.

stitutional rights of the weaker part of communities. But they must be attached to the government and its righteous laws, and to the peace and welfare of the community. And what will tend thus to attach them? To the government they will feel bound by the righteousness of its decisions and by its liberality to them. And what will induce them to regard the rights of the community? The liberality extended toward them, through the support the community give the government for this very thing. And not until the community shall contribute to the support of their government, which shall pledge itself to the support of the Military power, will *they*, or the State, be made sensible how *few* of its members will be necessary to devote a portion of their time to fitting and preparing themselves as the protectors of the rights of those who shall have willingly guaranteed to them a reciprocity of favors.

Any customs, forms, or practices, of any name or nature, however sacred they may have been held, or however useful the observance of them may have been, cease to be binding upon any people, so soon as the greatest good of those who practice or observe them, and of the whole through them, can no longer be accomplished by their continued observance; of which each individual is alone his judge, or rather God, whom he worships, judges for him, (which judgment, if he submit to, well—if not, it will rest on him to his condemnation; it is thus that God is the judge of the righteous, as he is also of the wicked,) and he may also be judged or directed, on being called out of said forms, to

testify against their use, believing, by reason of the immoral, covetous and hypocritical practices, in many things, that *those*, or many of *those*, who continue to observe them, worship not the living God, who in days of old ordained the establishment of *them* for good purposes, but the *forms* only, and them much for the purpose of being regarded by others as religious men ; from such men, the innocently conscientious, ever regarding justice and truth, will, as have our fathers, receive persecution ; fulfilling from age to age, in our bodies thus devoted for the good and the redemption of the world, “that which remains” to be fulfilled “of the sufferings of Christ ;” it being the spirit of Christ ruling in our hearts and consciences that calls forth the madness and the violence of man upon us, as it was the spirit of God in Christ, whom they knew not, that caused the Jews to hate him. Until persecution ceases, God through Christ will not have completed man’s redemption, although he in the figure of his body wrought out and manifested every process necessary for us to begin, and through the self same Christ or the Holy Spirit, to carry on and accomplish the *work* in ourselves and to the uttermost ends of the earth. And thus it is with the custom of war—it is ceasing to be the best *means*, (by reason of man’s progress from ignorance of the laws of nature, and her God, to a more perfect acquaintance with them) as in days of old, and to many at this day, to judge and punish the wicked of the world ; and as from *time to time* it shall cease to be necessary for *judgment*, Christ will say to his devoted disciples

“put up thy sword into its sheath.” Had Peter at some subsequent time, not having the sanction or command of his Lord, but through fear or any other cause, *taken* the sword, he must have perished by it. As the act of *taking* would have been an *assumption* of his, done in his own *will*, it would have been sinful, and called down upon him some just retribution, or the judgment of the sword of justice.

It is my firm belief that the good people of this Commonwealth would be highly benefitted if there were no more than one Military Company of fifty persons, rank and file, more or less, as considered best, to one legal Representative, throughout the State, constituting a corps of about twenty-five thousand men, to be perfectly equipped, and as fully compensated from the public chest for all the time they are called upon to devote to the duties of their callings as are the Representatives who spend so much time to accomplish that which can never be accomplished—the remodeling of Injustice, Oppression, Disorder and Weakness, into Justice, Freedom, Order and Power.

LETTER VI.

Having, Sir, unexpected opportunity and means, I shall, in this short Letter, give you some of my views on the measures to be adopted to carry into effect, not only the most ample release of all persons who may believe it morally wrong for *them* to do military duty, but of all others, in every condi-

tion of life, to whom the service is a burthen; and also my views of the most justifiable, liberal and orderly measures to be taken to organize and well sustain an efficient Military Power in this Commonwealth.

That it will be the *duty* of the Government to maintain its present form, or shadow, of military power, until it can avail itself of the substance, is true. Forms and shadows have some controlling influence on the ignorant and fearful part of every community, who, so long as they can be made to believe that in *them* there is substance and power, are as well controlled and feasted for the time, as are the more wise and thinking, with realities.

The Government, believing that her old military structure is rotten, and liable to fall on the heads of those whom it was intended to protect, if wise, will not only forsake it, but, in constructing another for like purposes, choose such materials as will be most certain to answer the purpose intended, counting the comparative bonafide cost of them to the whole community, who will have to foot the bills, as well as receive the benefits.

If the State believes, then, that she is in want of fifty workmen, more or less, to labor as a military corps in her defence, and that as many of such corps ought to be located in every town and city of the Commonwealth as said town or city may be legally entitled to send Representatives to the Legislature, not regarding their fractional privilege, and if she will engage to pay to every member of said corps as great a sum per day, and every fractional part

of a day, for their services, as she pays to said Representatives, she must authorise the civil officers of her towns and cities, from date, to enrol the names of such sane and well qualified persons, not exceeding fifty, more or less, as may offer themselves for the military service of the State, for one or more years, (but no one to be bound to said service for a longer time than he may choose, as his services will be less useful, and others may be kept back,) as a member of the first, second or third military company, as the case may be, of the city or town of —, under the new organization, and so soon as twenty such persons, more or less, shall have thus enrolled themselves, said civil officers shall call a meeting of said persons to sign their certificate of voluntary enrollment, in form somewhat like the following :

We, whose names are by us here subscribed, being of sober and sound mind, and free from any incumbrances that essentially disqualify us from a faithful discharge of the duties of a citizen or military soldiers of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do, on subscribing our names to this certificate, voluntarily enroll ourselves members of the First Military Company of — under the new organization, hereby severally subjecting ourselves to do the duties required by the laws of the State, &c., until we shall have made known, or any one of us, to the Commander of said Company his intention of withdrawing his services therefrom, or shall have been dismissed by the major vote of said company for inability or delinquency, as the case may

be, &c. The signing of which shall absolve said persons from any former military obligations to the Commonwealth ; and under the direction and presidency of said civil officer they shall be immediately legally authorised to proceed to the choice of such officers as may be by law deemed necessary for their government ; said proceedings to be returned by the civil officers to the constituted authority for his approval and legal commission ; and the commander of each company shall, through the company's clerk, keep open the roll of certificate enlistment to receive names whenever there shall be a less number than the law may require to constitute a full company.

So soon as the civil officers of any of the cities or towns of this Commonwealth shall certify to the Commander-in-Chief, and he shall have authorised them to, they shall publicly announce to their citizens that there have been so many military companies organized, under the new organizing laws of the State, as are by law required, and that all and every person within its limits, excepting field officers and the aforesaid volunteers, released from any further involuntary military service.

It is true some laws rather novel in their nature will be necessary to carry through this very liberal plan of Voluntary Service and compensated labor. I will notice but such as I think essential. The company first organized in any town or city to be called No. 1 of said town or city, and the next thus organized to be called No. 2, and so on to the completion of the requirements of the law. Said com-

panies to rank by the seniority of any anterior commission under the seal of the State, &c., which its commander elect may be able to produce; also to title themselves as they may please. Organized companies to vote in, and, for inability or misdemeanor, to vote their members out.

No member of any company to draw pay for his services unless he shall answer to his name, duly equipped, &c. on the call of the roll; and be subject to no greater fine, in addition to his loss of remuneration, than what may be voted to be assessed upon him for non-appearance only, by his fellow companions, which sum shall never exceed in amount his legal compensation for one day's service, and said fine may be held to defray the contingent expenses of the Company.

Delinquency in non-appearance, and for any other causes, to be decided and recorded within six days by the officers and clerk of the company.

The record of the companies to be subject to the inspection of any of its members, or any civil officer of the town or city, &c.

The company last formed in any city or town to disband itself on their being a diminution of its representatives—and perhaps other laws, the writer not being at all acquainted with military forms or law.

I will here add, that I could conscientiously preside at the organization of a military company as proposed, as readily as I could give my vote for a commander-in-chief of the State's civil and military departments, as are our governors, or give my vote

for any officer whom I had reason to believe would support a military power ; provided that the government should not think it necessary to raise more of such companies than I believed the public good required. And I will here improve this opportunity to say, that I do not believe there are any circumstances, at home or abroad, that would justify the State in requiring her citizens to maintain more than one *full* company to two town or city representatives ; but of this the citizens will decide as soon as they shall be called upon to pay, rather than plunder, those who are called upon to protect them.

It will be perceived by those who may acquaint themselves with the foregoing plan of Voluntary Enlistment, &c., that there can be but little doubt of an immediate organization of full companies under its provisions, in as much as paid services are more readily obtained than are unpaid ones ; but it may be urged as an objection, that so soon as the citizens of towns and cities shall become absolved from involuntary service, through the organization of the number of companies required to effect their freedom from the burthen of military duty, the newly organized companies will immediately disband, and the State be left without a military defence. And for what cause ? Will they not be as well paid as they are for other services to the State or to its citizens ? If not, they will be in duty bound to withhold their protection from those who may be unwilling to guarantee to them a reciprocity of favors.

...officer whom I had reason to believe
...a military power: I felt that the
...and I think it necessary to record
...company then I felt that I should
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...as they should
...than blunder, and
...them.

ERRATA. Page 24, eleventh line from the top, for friend read friends. Page 28, ninth line from the top, for made read suffered.

